MEMORIALS

PRESENTED TO THE

CONGRESS

OF THE

United States of America,

BY THE

DIFFERENT SOCIETIES

INSTITUTED FOR PROMOTING THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c. &c.

IN THE STATES OF

RHODE-ISLAND, CONNECTICUT, NEW-YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, MARYLAND, AND VIRGINIA.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF "THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, AND THE RELIEF OF FREE NEGROES UNLAWFULLY HELD IN BONDAGE, AND FOR IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN RACE."

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THE following Memorials were preſented and read in the Houſe of Repreſentatives of the United States, on the eighth day of December, 1791, when they were referred to a ſelect committee.

The Congreſs having made no further progreſs in this buſineſs, the Pennſylvania Society conceive it to be a matter of general importance that theſe Memorials ſhould be publiſhed, for the information of their fellow-citizens, and for the encouragement of the friends of univerſal liberty, both with us and in Europe.

And

And we truſt it will appear, that the different Abolition Societies, within the United States, have neither been deficient in their endeavors to promote the laudable purpoſes of their inſtitution, nor in a due reſpect to government in their mode of application.

Having thus, as humble inſtruments, performed what we believe to be our duty in this inſtance, we chearfully wait for the reſult—and leave the buſineſs at preſent, with a confidence, that the Great Diſpoſer of all human events will, in his own time, aboliſh the inhuman and iniquitous cuſtom of enſlaving our fellow-creatures.

Philadelphia, January 2, 1792.

Rhode-Island.

To the SENATE and REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED STATES—

The PROVIDENCE SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Perſons unlawfully held in Bondage, and for improving the Condition of the African Race—conſiſting of numbers of the Citizens of the Diſtricts of RHODE-ISLAND *and* MASSACHUSETTS, *and others, incorporated by law:*

MOST RESPECTFULLY SOLICIT THE ATTENTION OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE SLAVE TRADE.

ALTHOUGH it has been the policy of the American Union to ſuffer the powers of authoriſing domeſtic ſlavery, and of importing ſlaves into the United States, for a limited time; yet, under our preſent excellent Conſtitution, Congreſs

"have

" have authority to reſtrain the citizens " of the United States from carrying on " the African trade for the purpoſe of " ſupplying foreigners with ſlaves, and to " prohibit foreigners from fitting out veſ- " ſels in any port of the United States, for " tranſporting perſons from Africa to any " foreign port."

The ſalutary regulations already adopted, for ſecuring the rights of the Indian nations on our weſtern frontiers, are conſidered as a pledge to the world of the humanity of Congreſs : and, while the means of ſecuring our own citizens againſt a deplorable captivity among the ſavages of this continent, or the cruel pirates of the Mediterranean, are under inveſtigation, it is our earneſt deſire, that the means of protecting the people of foreign countries againſt ſimilar outrages on the ſacred rights of humanity from our own citizens, may alſo be the ſubject of deliberation.

That the ſlave trade, as it is carried on in Europe, and by ſome individuals here, is not only againſt the ſacred laws of the great RULER of the Univerſe, " who hath

" made

" made of one blood all the nations of " men," but that it is alſo injurious to the true commercial intereſt of a nation, and deſtructive of the lives of ſeamen, has been proved, by a courſe of reaſoning and experience, ſo plainly, we conceive, as to require no further elucidation.

For ſeveral years laſt paſt, many of the greateſt and beſt characters in Europe have laboured to reform the commercial ſyſtems there adopted, by a total abolition of the ſlave trade. But, whether Great-Britain or France will have the credit of firſt overcoming deep-rooted prejudices and miſtaken policy, and of taking the lead in reformation on this ſubject—or, whether the force of cuſtom and habit will, for a longer ſeaſon, ſtifle the voice of truth and humanity in thoſe nations, time is yet to diſcover.

It is happy for us in this particular, that there is the utmoſt reaſon to hope, that our commercial ſyſtem, yet in embryo, will be ſtrongly impreſſed with thoſe great principles of natural and political law, which gave birth to the late Revolution,

and

and form and conſiſtency to this great empire.

The nations in Europe who carry on this iniquitous traffic, and thereby furniſh their own colonies with labourers, flatter themſelves with advantages, not to be contemplated by the government of the United States; whoſe citizens, ſo far as they are concerned in it, offer themſelves as volunteers in a ſcene of cruelty and blood, and become the authors of the moſt painful ſlavery, merely to accumulate private wealth.

The capital ſtock employed in this trade, on its prohibition, it is conceived, might be employed to much greater public advantage in the fiſheries and other branches of commerce, or in manufactures, for the eſtabliſhment of which nothing ſeems more wanting than capital ſtocks.

But, it is not the object of this addreſs to enter into particulars; without bringing the ſubject up to view, we ſhould have failed in a duty we owe to thoſe who are endowed with our common nature. The wiſdom and goodneſs of Congreſs, we have

have full confidence, will ſuggeſt and ſecure the execution of the moſt effectual meaſures for making the juſtice and humanity of the nation commenſurate with its juriſdiction.

(Copy.)

By order of the Society,

(Signed)

DAVID HOWELL, *Preſident.*

Providence, Dec. 28, 1790.

Connecticut.

To the Honorable the SENATE and HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, in Congreſs aſſembled—

The PETITION and ADDRESS of the CONNECTICUT SOCIETY, for the promotion of Freedom, and for the relief of Perſons unlawfully holden in Bondage:

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT, from a ſober conviction of the unrighteouſneſs of ſlavery, your petitioners have long beheld, with grief, a conſiderable number of our fellow-men doomed to perpetual bondage, in a country which boaſts of her freedom.

That, though all men are of the ſame ſpecies, and by nature have an equal claim

to

to all the enjoyments of life, it has been the unhappy policy of this country, to impoſe ſlavery and want on thoſe who are brought from Africa; while we hold forth the proſpects of liberty and plenty to emigrants from all other countries.

That the principle, "that the labour of "ſlaves is neceſſary to the due cultivation "of our land," has introduced a commerce in the human race far beyond the pretended neceſſities of our country, and has led the citizens of theſe States into a very extenſive trade for the ſupply of other nations with ſlaves—a trade, in the end, generally unproductive to the adventurers, always deſtructive to the lives and morals of ſeamen, and, as relative to the victims devoted to ſlavery, moſt inhuman, not only with reſpect to their ſubſequent ſituation, but eſpecially during their paſſage.

Your petitioners are fully of opinion, that calm reflection will at laſt convince the world, that the whole ſyſtem of African ſlavery is unjuſt in its nature—impolitic in its principles—and, in its conſequences,

quences, ruinous to the induſtry and enterpriſe of the citizens of theſe States.

From a conviction of theſe truths, your petitioners were led, by motives, we conceive, of general philanthropy, to aſſociate ourſelves for the protection and aſſiſtance of this unfortunate part of our fellow-men; and, though this ſociety has been lately eſtabliſhed, it has now become generally extenſive through this ſtate, and, we fully believe, embraces, on this ſubject, the ſentiments of a large majority of its citizens.

With ſuch ſentiments, we, your petitioners, eſteem it our indiſpenſable duty to join with other ſocieties, inſtituted for the ſame purpoſe, in requeſting the interpoſition of the Supreme Council of the nation in behalf of that unhappy people, to check the progreſs of this evil ſyſtem, and, while it exiſts, to meliorate the condition of the unfortunate ſufferers.

Your petitioners rejoice that the ſubject excited the attention of the Houſe of Repreſentatives the laſt ſeſſion; and, though it is by no means requeſted that Congreſs

will enact laws which would impugn the Conſtitution of theſe United States, or be inconſiſtent with the general welfare of their country, yet your petitioners earneſtly pray, that Congreſs will exert the powers conſtitutionally veſted in them, to paſs ſuch laws as will prevent, as much as poſſible, the horrors of the ſlave trade—will prohibit the citizens of the United States from carrying on the trade, for the purpoſe of ſupplying foreigners with ſlaves—will prohibit foreigners from fitting out veſſels in any port of the United States, for tranſporting perſons from Africa to any foreign port—and, as far as poſſible, will alleviate the ſufferings of thoſe who are now in ſlavery, and check the further progreſs of this inhuman commerce.

Your petitioners, aſſuring your Honors that their united exertions will ever aim at the happineſs and proſperity of the American Republic, chearfully ſubmit this their requeſt to the wiſdom of Congreſs, with full confidence, that that honorable body will ever purſue the great objects

objects of all good governments, to increase the felicity, and meliorate the condition, of the human race.

IN the name, and by order, of the Connecticut Society, for the promotion of freedom, &c.

EZRA STILES, *President of the said Society.*

SIMEON BALDWIN, *Secretary.*

New-Haven, Jan. 7, 1791.

(Copy.)

New-York.

To the Honorable the CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA—

The MEMORIAL of the NEW-YORK SOCIETY, for promoting the Manumiſſion of Slaves, and protecting ſuch of them as have been, or may be, liberated.

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

THAT your memorialiſts have long contemplated, with pain and horror, the inhuman traffic carried on to the coaſt of Africa, for the importation of ſlaves.

They conſider this trade ſo repugnant to the principles of humanity, to thoſe ideas of the rights of mankind which form the baſis of the government of the United States, and to the benign ſentiments of the Chriſtian religion, that it ought

ought not to receive any countenance from thoſe who profeſs to be under the influence of either.

Your memorialiſts regret, that the powers of the general government are ſo limited, on this head, as to prevent their totally inhibiting, for the preſent, this diſgraceful traffic.

But, as the manner of conducting it is attended with circumſtances of injuſtice and cruelty, for remedy of which the powers of Congreſs are competent, your memorialiſts humbly confide, that theſe powers will be exerciſed to alleviate, as much as poſſible, an evil, which cannot, as yet, be entirely prevented.

Your memorialiſts hope, that, while a number of the greateſt and beſt men, in two of the firſt nations in Europe, are aſſiduouſly employed in endeavouring to baniſh this diſhonorable trade from their own countries, that the rulers of the United States of America, who have ſet theſe nations ſo fair an example of reſpect for the rights of human nature, will not fail to do all in their power to leſſen the miſeries

ſeries of the wretched Africans, whoſe rights, by this practice, are ſo outrageouſly violated.

Your memorialiſts, therefore, humbly pray, that your honorable body will exerciſe the powers with which you are inveſted, in alleviating, as much as poſſible, the horrors of the ſlave trade.

And, as in duty bound, your memorialiſts will ever pray, &c.

Signed, in behalf of the Society,

MATTHEW CLARKSON,
Vice-Preſident.

New-York, December 14, 1790.

(Copy.)

Pennſylvania.

To the House of Representatives of the UNITED STATES—

The MEMORIAL of the PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and for improving the Condition of the African race:

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

THAT, actuated by the ſame powerful motives of duty which excited your memorialiſts to addreſs the late Congreſs on the ſubject of ſlavery, in the month of February, 1790, we are again impelled to requeſt your ſerious attention to the important buſineſs of the ſlave trade.

We wiſh not to treſpaſs upon your time, by referring to the different declarations

made by Congreſs on the unalienable right of all men to equal liberty; neither would we attempt, in this place, to point out the inconſiſtency of extending freedom to a part only of the human race. The object of the preſent application is, to intreat you to conſider of ſome method ſpeedily to put into effect the two following Reſolves, agreed to by the committee of the whole Houſe, and entered on your Journals in March, 1790.

"That Congreſs have authority to re-
"ſtrain the citizens of the United States
"from carrying on the African trade for
"the purpoſe of ſupplying foreigners with
"ſlaves, and of providing, by proper re-
"gulations, for the humane treatment,
"during their paſſage, of ſlaves imported,
"by the ſaid citizens, into the States ad-
"mitting ſuch importation."

"That Congreſs have alſo authority to
"prohibit foreigners from fitting out veſ-
"ſels, in any port of the United States,
"for tranſporting perſons from Africa to
"any foreign port."

We hope our zeal in this buſineſs will

not

not be regarded as an improper intruſion on your councils. We know not of any concern, in which human beings can be engaged, more likely to draw down a bleſſing on their country, than that of "doing unto others as they would that "others ſhould do unto them." And, in the pleaſing hope that this ſolemn truth will alſo gain a full aſſent in your minds, we ſubmit the cauſe at preſent; earneſtly praying, that you may be ſo directed, in the conſideration of this important buſineſs, that the reſult of your deliberations may tend to advance the honor of the United States, and to improve the happineſs of mankind univerſally.

Signed by order, and in behalf of the Pennſylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.

JAMES PEMBERTON,
Preſident.

Atteſted,

JOHN M'CREA,
JOSEPH P. NORRIS, } *Secretaries.*

Philadelphia, October 3, 1791.

To the Honorable the CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES—

The PETITION of the Members of the WASHINGTON SOCIETY, for the Relief of Free Negroes, and others, unlawfully held in Bondage:

SHEWETH,

THAT, inaſmuch as, by conſtruction of the ninth ſection of the firſt article of the government of the United States, a traffic to Africa for ſlaves may be carried on by ſuch of the States as may think proper to admit ſlaves; your petitioners, deeply impreſſed by the unhappy policy which rendered ſuch a conſtruction of the ſaid ſection neceſſary, do humbly pray, that the honorable the Congreſs will, by law, regulate the traffic, or trade, in ſuch manner, as may leſſen the miſeries of the unhappy Negroes on their paſſage by ſea, which

which uſually attend them for want of air, victuals, and convenient room—And your petitioners further pray, that Congreſs may, ſo far as may be conſiſtent with ſaid ſection, diſcourage all ſuch traffic, by preventing foreigners from bringing ſlaves to the United States, and citizens from carrying on ſuch trade to foreign countries —And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will pray.

Signed, on behalf of the members of the Society,

ANDREW SWEARINGEN,
Vice-Preſident.

Maryland.

To the Honorable the CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES—

The MEMORIAL of the Subſcribers, formed into a Society for the Abolition of Slavery, &c. in BALTIMORE :

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

THAT the objects of their aſſociation are founded in reaſon and humanity. That, in addition to an avowed enmity to ſlavery in every form, your memorialiſts, in their exertions, contemplate a melioration of the condition of that unhappy part of the human race who are doomed to fill the degraded rank of ſlaves in our country, and a protection of the unhappy ſons of Africa, who are entitled to liberty, but unjuſtly deprived of it.

In

In the profecution of a work of ſo much benevolence, your memorialiſts would gladly claim the aſſiſtance of your honorable body; but, with pain, they obſerve, that the conſtitution of the national government prohibits all interference, for a limited time, in the policy of any of the exiſting States, reſpecting the migration or importation of ſuch perſons as they ſhall think proper to admit. Whilſt we deem this reſtraint a temporary ſanction to the partial infraction of the rights of man, recogniſed by the laws of ſome of the States, and ſo far a defect in the noble ſtructure of our liberties, yet, ſuch is our regard to the original ſolemn compact of ſociety, that we ſolicit no deviation from the principles eſtabliſhed by it. But, as your honorable body has juſtly and wiſely determined, "that you have authority to re-
"ſtrain the citizens of the United States
"from carrying on the African trade, for
"the purpoſe of ſupplying foreigners with
"ſlaves, and of providing, by proper re-
"gulations, for the humane treatment,
"during their paſſage, of ſlaves imported

"by

into the States admitting ſuch importation.

Signed by the Members generally.

Similar Petitions were preſented from CHESTER-TOWN SOCIETY and CAROLINE-COUNTY SOCIETY, ſigned by

JAMES M. ANDERSON,
Preſident.
(In behalf, and by order of Cheſter-Town Society.)

Dated Novem. 19, 1791.

Atteſt.
DANIEL M'CURTIN, *Secretary.*

EDWARD WHITE,
Vice-Preſident.
(In behalf, and by order of Caroline-County Society.)

Dated Sept. 6, 1791.

Atteſt.
CHA. EMERY, *Secretary.*

Virginia.

To the Honorable the CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA—

The MEMORIAL of the VIRGINIA SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of free Negroes, and others, unlawfully held in bondage, and for other humane purpoſes :

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

THAT your memorialiſts, fully believing that "righteouſneſs exalteth "a nation," and that ſlavery is not only an odious degradation, but an outrageous violation of one of the moſt eſſential rights of human nature, and utterly repugnant to the precepts of the goſpel, which

which breathes "peace on earth, good-"will to men;" they lament that a practice, ſo inconſiſtent with true policy and the unalienable rights of men, ſhould ſubſiſt in ſo enlightened an age, and among a people profeſſing, that all mankind are, by nature, equally entitled to freedom. But, more eſpecially, that a trade to Africa, for the expreſs purpoſe of enſlaving and tranſporting that much-injured and oppreſſed people from their native country and connections, ſhould be continued, or ſuffered, by any of the United States of America.

Your memorialiſts do, therefore, requeſt, and carneſtly intreat Congreſs to take the premiſes into conſideration, and exert the powers they are poſſeſſed of, in paſſing ſuch laws as may put a ſtop to, or diſcourage, ſo unrighteous a traffic; and alleviate, as much as poſſible, the horrors and cruelties generally practiſed in the proſecution of the trade, ſo contrary to every ſentiment of humanity and juſtice, and deſtructive of the lives and temporal happineſs of that unfortunate race of mankind.

kind. They conceive that an act ſo laudable, would well become the Repreſentatives of a free people, and be pleaſing in the ſight of the merciful Father of all the families of the earth.

Signed, by appointment, and on behalf of the ſaid Society, at their half-yearly meeting, held in the town of Mancheſter the 5th day of the 4th month, called April, 1791.

ROBERT PLEASANTS,
Preſident.

Atteſt.
JAMES SMITH, *Secretary.*

FINIS.